

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1-3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously presented) A method of establishing a connection between a first node and a second node in a system area network, comprising:

allocating a virtual connection unit pair to the connection, the virtual connection unit pair being associated with the first node;

establishing the connection between the virtual connection unit pair of the first node and a connection unit pair of the second node; and

transmitting one or more messages between the first node and the second node over the connection using the virtual connection unit pair, wherein the virtual connection unit pair has only a virtual connection unit pair identifier and an availability bit.

5-6. (Cancelled)

7. (Currently amended) ~~The method of claim 1~~ A method of establishing a connection between a first node and a second node in a system area network, comprising:

allocating a virtual connection unit pair to the connection, the virtual connection unit pair being associated with the first node;

associating the virtual connection unit pair with a physical connection unit pair that is used for transporting data using the connection, the physical connection unit pair being associated with the first node;

establishing the connection between the virtual connection unit pair of the first node and a connection unit pair of the second node;

transmitting one or more messages between the first node and the second node over the connection using the virtual connection unit pair; and

tearing down the connection between the first node and the second node, wherein tearing down the connection includes placing the virtual connection unit pair in a time-wait state, wherein the physical connection unit pair associated with the first node is not placed in a time-wait state.

8. (Currently amended) ~~The method of claim 1~~ A method of establishing a connection between a first node and a second node in a system area network, comprising:  
allocating a virtual connection unit pair to the connection, the virtual connection unit pair being associated with the first node;  
associating the virtual connection unit pair with a physical connection unit pair that is used for transporting data using the connection, the physical connection unit pair being associated with the first node;  
establishing the connection between the virtual connection unit pair of the first node and a connection unit pair of the second node;  
transmitting one or more messages between the first node and the second node over the connection using the virtual connection unit pair; and  
tearing down the connection between the first node and the second node, wherein tearing down the connection includes placing the virtual connection unit pair in a time-wait state, wherein a physical connection unit pair associated with the first node is used to establish another connection while the virtual connection unit pair is in the time-wait state.

9-13. (Cancelled)

14. (Previously presented) A computer program product in a computer readable medium for establishing a connection between a first node and a second node in a system area network, comprising:  
first instructions for allocating a virtual connection unit pair to the connection, the virtual connection unit pair being associated with the first node;  
second instructions for establishing the connection between the virtual connection unit pair of the first node and a connection unit pair of the second node; and  
third instructions for transmitting one or more messages between the first node and the second node over the connection using the virtual connection unit pair, wherein the virtual connection unit pair has only a virtual connection unit pair identifier and an availability bit.

15-16. (Cancelled)

17. (Currently amended) ~~The computer program product of claim 11~~ A computer program product in a computer readable medium for establishing a connection between a first node and a second node in a system area network, comprising:

first instructions for allocating a virtual connection unit pair to the connection, the virtual connection unit pair being associated with the first node;

second instructions for associating the virtual connection unit pair with a physical connection unit pair that is used for transporting data using the connection, the physical connection unit pair being associated with the first node;

third instructions for establishing the connection between the virtual connection unit pair of the first node and a connection unit pair of the second node;

fourth instructions for transmitting one or more messages between the first node and the second node over the connection using the virtual connection unit pair; and

fifth instructions for tearing down the connection between the first node and the second node, wherein the fifth instructions for tearing down the connection include instructions for placing the virtual connection unit pair in a time-wait state, wherein the physical connection unit pair associated with the first node is not placed in a time-wait state.

18. (Currently amended) ~~The computer program product of claim 11~~ A computer program product in a computer readable medium for establishing a connection between a first node and a second node in a system area network, comprising:

first instructions for allocating a virtual connection unit pair to the connection, the virtual connection unit pair being associated with the first node;

second instructions for associating the virtual connection unit pair with a physical connection unit pair that is used for transporting data using the connection, the physical connection unit pair being associated with the first node;

third instructions for establishing the connection between the virtual connection unit pair of the first node and a connection unit pair of the second node;

fourth instructions for transmitting one or more messages between the first node and the second node over the connection using the virtual connection unit pair; and

fifth instructions for tearing down the connection between the first node and the second node, wherein the fifth instructions for tearing down the connection include instructions for placing the virtual connection unit pair in a time-wait state, wherein a physical connection unit pair associated with the first node is used to establish another connection while the virtual connection unit pair is in the time-wait state.

19-23. (Cancelled)

24. (Previously presented) An apparatus for establishing a connection between a first node and a second node in a system area network, comprising:

means for allocating a virtual connection unit pair to the connection, the virtual connection unit pair being associated with the first node;

means for establishing the connection between the virtual connection unit pair of the first node and a connection unit pair of the second node; and

means for transmitting one or more messages between the first node and the second node over the connection using the virtual connection unit pair, wherein the virtual connection unit pair has only a virtual connection unit pair identifier and an availability bit.

25-26. (Cancelled)

27. (Currently amended) ~~The apparatus of claim 21~~ An apparatus for establishing a connection between a first node and a second node in a system area network, comprising:

means for allocating a virtual connection unit pair to the connection, the virtual connection unit pair being associated with the first node;

means for associating the virtual connection unit pair with a physical connection unit pair that is used for transporting data using the connection, the physical connection unit pair being associated with the first node;

means for establishing the connection between the virtual connection unit pair of the first node and a connection unit pair of the second node;

means for transmitting one or more messages between the first node and the second node over the connection using the virtual connection unit pair; and

means for tearing down the connection between the first node and the second node, wherein the means for tearing down the connection includes means for placing the virtual connection unit pair in a time-wait state, wherein the physical connection unit pair associated with the first node is not placed in a time-wait state.

28. (Currently amended) ~~The apparatus of claim 21~~ An apparatus for establishing a connection between a first node and a second node in a system area network, comprising:

means for allocating a virtual connection unit pair to the connection, the virtual connection unit pair being associated with the first node;

means for associating the virtual connection unit pair with a physical connection unit pair that is used for transporting data using the connection, the physical connection unit pair being associated with the first node;

means for establishing the connection between the virtual connection unit pair of the first node and a connection unit pair of the second node;

means for transmitting one or more messages between the first node and the second node over the connection using the virtual connection unit pair; and

means for tearing down the connection between the first node and the second node, wherein the means for tearing down the connection includes means for placing the virtual connection unit pair in a time-wait state, wherein a physical connection unit pair associated with the first node is used to establish another connection while the virtual connection unit pair is in the time-wait state.

29-30. (Cancelled)